



Climate Change and Skagit Land Trust's Conservation Strategy

Skagit Land Trust worked under our first Conservation Strategy for over a decade to guide our preservation and restoration activities. However, evolving science, increased data availability and need for a more sophisticated blueprint led the Trust to develop a new Conservation Strategy in 2014. The new Strategy uses the best available scientific data and analyses and geographic information system (GIS) mapping tools together with extensive local knowledge and plans to prioritize lands for conservation. Our current Strategy is the only compilation of data that is in a useable scale and context to enable community-based, voluntary, local conservation in the Skagit.

Skagit Land Trust's new Conservation Strategy addresses climate change by prioritizing land conservation in places that build ecosystem resiliency, and in places that will provide the best opportunities for habitat and species adaptation in the face of changing conditions. These concepts are embedded in the Strategy's Guiding Principles, which call out many concepts of landscape ecology and planning for biodiversity, including:

1. the importance of protecting core areas as refugia for species to repopulate surrounding areas.
2. preserving landscape connectivity to allow for species migration and adaptation.
3. protecting ecosystem processes that sustain, build and form native habitats.

In addition, the Conservation Strategy places a priority on protecting large areas of native low elevation forest, which serve the important function of carbon sequestration. We are also working on a marine/saltwater shoreline element of the new Strategy. This will help us identify the most important areas to protect, in the face of sea level rise, to allow for coastal habitats to re-form and/or migrate inland.

